Chapter - 4
Land Management Area Guidelines

Due to the large size and diverse landscape of the lands in this project, this plan will not make specific prescriptions for every Chesapeake Forest parcel. Rather, the planning team identified specific areas based on physical attributes that need to dominate future management decisions.

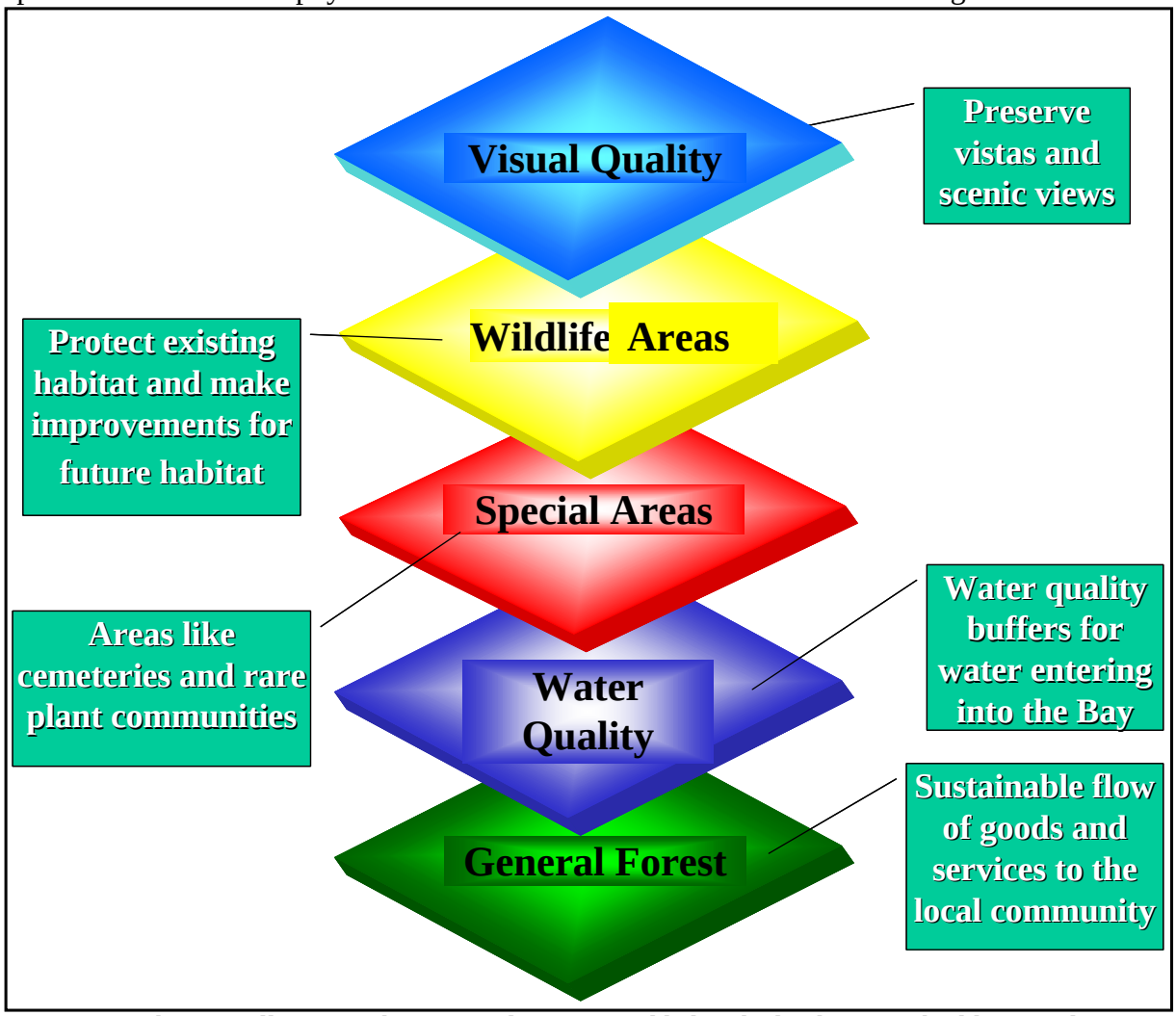

Figure 12. Schematic illustrating how special areas are added to the landscape to build a complex mosaic of production and protected lands.

Figure 12 illustrates the sequence of identifying these areas for planning purposes. Beginning on the bottom, general forest management area is first constrained by identifying the areas where water-land interfaces require attention, either through riparian forest buffers or wetland buffers. Special areas come next, where a particular situation needs special management attention. Wildlife habitat areas may need to be established where a special combination of conditions is required by a species or suite of species. Finally, attention must be paid to the visual impact of a practice, considering its location or neighbor concerns. General recommendations were then prepared for each area to provide guidelines to field managers, who will need to address each situation on the basis of good inventory, analysis, and planning methods.

1. General Forest Areas

One of the goals of this project is to maintain an economically sustainable forest and contribute to the local economy through providing forest-related employment and products.

The Chesapeake Forest Lands have a high proportion of pine plantations 80% of the entire forest. The majority of these plantations are very young (47% under the age of 15 years, and 80% under 25). This means that much of the near-term management will be limited to mid-rotation thinning, and vegetation control. Some final timber harvest is possible, and will be identified for harvesting where appropriate in the annual work plan. Site preparation and planting work in the immediate future will be fairly minimal, due to the limited amount of final harvest that is planned.

While most of the general forest lands are in young loblolly pine plantations, there are also areas of mixed hardwoods, cutover stands with some merchantable trees remaining, and some mixed pine-hardwood stands within the general forest management areas (See Chapter 5).

2. Water Quality Areas

Water quality areas (primarily riparian forest buffers or wetland buffers) will be marked, established and maintained according to the overall Guidelines (see Chapter 6). All management activities within these areas will be designed to protect or improve their ecological functions in protecting or enhancing water quality. The long-term goal is to achieve and maintain a mature mixed forest stand. Where the current forest is a pine plantation, the shaping of the riparian forest buffers will generally commence at the time of the first silvicultural activity on the adjoining stands. Management will generally focus on thinning pines to encourage hardwood growth, marking boundaries so that field personnel and contractors can conduct operations properly, and closely monitoring activities to prevent soil disruption or damage and protect stream bank and wetland integrity. In these areas where young pine plantations currently exist, the desired forest conditions may take several decades (and appropriate treatments) to emerge.

3. Special Areas

Sites of ecologic, geologic, or historic significance will be identified and managed for their special qualities. Some examples are listed in the Plan, but they are not a comprehensive listing. Field managers will be trained in identification of special areas, or potential special areas, and will be required to assess, map in draft form, and report such areas to their supervisor upon their discovery. Appropriate expertise from DNR will be involved in assuring that special sites are properly inventoried, marked, and managed, and that adequate records are created and maintained for each site. A breakdown of some locations of the special sites that have been identified on the Chesapeake Forest Lands can be found in chapter 7 of this document.

4. Wildlife Areas

Wildlife habitat is enhanced in large measure by widening the riparian forest buffers and establishing other corridors where needed. The widened riparian forest buffers expand on water quality protection and take advantage of the important habitat and life zones associated with riparian areas. The Guidelines (See Chapter 6 page 67) call for creation of a minimal 150' combined riparian forest buffer and wildlife buffer on each side of a stream or water body (Buffer Zone 3). In areas that are designated for high-quality forest interior dwelling (FID) bird habitat or Delmarva fox squirrel habitat, the guidelines in this plan call for creation of a minimal 300-foot combined riparian and wildlife buffer from the water's edge (Buffer Zone 4). In some cases, these guidelines may be met when the riparian forest buffers are established on ecological

boundaries. In other cases, the riparian forest buffer will be widened to meet these wildlife guidelines. The long-term goal for these habitat areas is the maintenance of a mature mixed pine/hardwood forest that is managed to maintain a desired species mix and canopy at all times. Timber harvesting, when conducted, will be done by selection harvests designed to maintain adequate canopy cover and relatively undisturbed forest conditions. Chapter 8 outlines the goals and guidelines for these areas.

5. Visual Quality Areas

These are areas that are managed to serve as visual buffers along public roads and adjacent properties to protect existing scenic views or vistas. Buffers protecting views of the land from the water should also be addressed in the establishment of riparian forest buffers.

6. Non-forested Lands

These lands, although not fully identified as a particular "area" in the management plan, are estimated to cover about 4% of Chesapeake Forest Lands. They consist primarily of roads, railroads, transmission lines, agriculture fields, legal drainage ditches and their access roads. In addition a large proportion of the area is in open Marshes. The latter areas may need to be maintained in non-forest vegetation either to allow management activities on the forest, or to meet legal easement requirements. They can provide important wildlife habitat elements such as grassy areas or food plots that benefit game species management and do not interfere with forest management. Control of invading brush and trees can sometimes be provided through agreements with hunting club licensees or contractors. Roads that are not needed for fire or emergency access should be considered for closure.

These open areas are the most susceptible to invasion by exotic species. Forest management personnel need to be watchful for such invasions and, where possible, eradicate them as soon as they are found.